

their paychecks today that they would otherwise get. So I think those problems need to be addressed.

But on the other issue, I at least believe that we made some good progress yesterday, and I'm looking forward to the report today and continuing this process until we succeed, until we get this job done.

Q. Can we ask the leaders, Mr. President, if they will get the checks out and—

Q. Do you think the Congress should go home when millions are denied subsistence checks over Christmas?

Speaker Gingrich. Well, let me just say, if I could for a second, Mr. President, I think both the House and Senate hope to get those bills down here today so that the—the AFDC and the—as the President mentioned the other day on television.

Q. What are the chances of reopening the Government, Mr. Speaker?

Speaker Gingrich. I think we're going to talk about that now.

Q. Mr. Speaker, do you feel like a dog being wagged by its tail? [*Laughter*]

Speaker Gingrich. It's amazing you guys get paid for some of these questions, on the eve of Christmas. Merry Christmas.

Q. No, it's not my expression; it's the President's analysis.

The President. I never called the Speaker a dog. [*Laughter*]

Q. No, I know you didn't.

Speaker Gingrich. And I'm deeply grateful. [*Laughter*]

Q. Mr. President, do you think you can get a framework of a deal by Christmas?

The President. I'm prepared to—let me just say, I'm prepared to just keep working. I think all of us want to have Christmas with our families, but beyond that, I'm prepared to keep working. And I'm going to do everything I can to succeed, and that's what we're going to talk about.

Q. Mr. Speaker—

The President. Thank you. We really need to go to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:52 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, prior to a meeting with congressional leaders. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement With Congressional Leaders on Budget Negotiations

December 22, 1995

Today we had good meetings which built on the progress made in yesterday's discussions. Staff will prepare further analysis to clarify options for the budget advisory group, which will then advise the principals on outstanding issues. Following the meeting of the budget advisory

group, the principals will meet again next Friday afternoon.

NOTE: This statement was announced jointly with Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Bob Dole, Senate majority leader.

Statement on Signing Limited Continuing Appropriations Legislation

December 22, 1995

Today I have signed into law House Joint Resolution 136, which ensures that the Government makes veterans' benefit payments to 3.3

million veterans and their survivors without further delay.

The resolution also provides funding for several vitally important programs for children and

families. It continues funding for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), ensuring that nearly 9 million children receive benefits vital to their well-being. It funds child care for about 600,000 children whose parents are trying to work their way off welfare. And it continues funding for State child support enforcement agencies to ensure that "deadbeat dads" do not get a reprieve from supporting their children.

In addition, H.J. Res. 136 provides authority for the District of Columbia to continue full operations. The resolution contains an objectionable provision that would single out poor women by prohibiting the use of District funds for providing abortion services. I have opposed including this provision in the regular fiscal year 1996 District of Columbia appropriations bill. Nevertheless, H.J. Res. 136 allows the District government to continue to operate without disruption.

Although I welcome H.J. Res. 136, it is a poor substitute for what the Congress should do immediately—that is, send me an acceptable continuing resolution to reopen the departments and agencies that are at least partially shut down because they lack fiscal year 1996 appropriations. Along with the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Health and Human Services, they include the Departments of Education, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, Commerce, Justice, State, and the Interior; the Environmental Protection Agency; the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the Small Business Administration.

To be sure, H.J. Res. 136 prevents the serious impact that the partial shutdown could have had on 3.3 million veterans and their survivors as well as nearly 9 million low-income children. But the shutdown continues to hurt millions of

innocent Americans—from the 20,000 parents and students each day who cannot apply for student aid, to the 2,500 moderate- and low-income working families each day who cannot get their Federal Housing Administration (FHA) mortgage loans processed.

The shutdown also has forced the affected departments and agencies to furlough a total of about 280,000 Federal employees, throwing their lives into disruption and raising their fears just as the holidays approach. Federal workers, who are already being asked to do their jobs more efficiently as we downsize the Government, deserve better.

The congressional majority apparently wants to use a partial Government shutdown to force me into accepting their extreme budget plan. It did not work last month, when the majority prompted an earlier shutdown by not sending me an acceptable continuing resolution. And it will not work now.

The Congress should send me an acceptable continuing resolution to reopen the Government, return to work the 280,000 Federal employees who were furloughed through no fault of their own, provide back pay for these workers, and give the American people the services they expect from their Government.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
December 22, 1995.

NOTE: H.J. Res. 136, approved December 22, was assigned Public Law No. 104-69. An original was not available for verification of the content of this statement.

Statement on the Airline Tragedy Near Buga, Colombia *December 22, 1995*

Hillary and I offer our profound condolences to the many families whose loved ones perished in the crash December 20 of American Airlines flight 965 near Buga, Colombia. Coming on the eve of the holiday season, this tragic event takes on even greater poignancy. I have dispatched an interagency team to the site which, working alongside Colombian authorities, will pursue the

goals of searching for survivors, identifying victims, and determining the cause of the crash.

Our hopes and prayers, along with those of all Americans, are with those whose lives have been so affected by this tragedy.